

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM USMISSION NATO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 241

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 0973

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NATO, CH

SUBJECT: PRC WARNINGS ABOUT DANGER OF WAR

REF: A. USNATO 0742 B. STATE 028676

1. AT FEBRUARY 18 POLADS, NATO/IS DISTRIBUTED BELOW QUOTED DRAFT (ISD/108) PAPER ON THE SUBJECT STUDY.

2. POLADS ARE ASKED TO COMMENT UPON THIS DRAFT AT THEIR FEBRUARY 25 MEETING. ON THE BASIS OF THOSE COMMENTS, POLADS CHAIRMAN WILL MAKE A REPORT TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL ON THIS SUBJECT IN HIS OWN NAME.

3. ACTION: GUIDANCE IN TIME FOR FEBRUARY 25 POLADS.

4. BEGIN TEXT:

CHINESE STATEMENTS ON THE DANGER OF WAR

1. THE MAIN THEME OF THE PRC PRONOUNCEMENTS OVER THE PAST
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MONTHS HAS BEEN THAT THE TWO SUPERFPOWERS ARE BOGGED DOWN IN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISIS AND THUS ARE INCREASINGLY LIKELY TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR HEGEMONY. SIGNIFICANTLY, THE GENERAL WAR THAT IS CURRENTLY PROJECTED AS POSSIBLE DIFFERS

FROM THE PAST IN THAT CHINA IS NOT PROTRAYED AS AN IMMEDIATE TARGET OR NECESSARILY AS A PROTAGONIST. THIS LOGICALLY STEMS FROM CHINESE COMMENT OVER THE PAST YEAR WHICH HAS STRESSED THAT EUROPE IS THE FOCUS OF SUPERPOWER CONTENTION AND THAT THE MEDITERRANEAN, THE SOUTHERN FLANK OF EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE PERSIAN GULF ARE THE MOST LIKELY AREAS IN WHICH A GENERAL CONFLICT COULD BE IGNITED.

2. CHINESE WARNINGS ABOUT THE DANGER OF IMPENDING WAR SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TO LITERALLY BUT HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DIALECTIC-IDEOLOGICAL WORLD OUTLOOK THAT COLOURS CHINESE STATEMENTS, TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES IN THE CHINESE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THE PURPOSES OF CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY.

3. THE PRINCIPLE OF "INEVITABILIT OF WAR" IS IN A WAY A COROLLARY OF THE "PERMANENCE OF REVOLUTION" IN CHINA. PEKING'S INCREASED EMPHASIS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF WAR MAY BE LARGELY PROPAGANDISTIC, INTENDED PRIMARILY FOR DOMESTIC AND WORLD CONSUMPTION (PARTICULARLY WITH THE NON-ALIGNED) TO REFUTE THE IDEA OF US-SOVIET DETENTE. THEIR OPINION IS ROOTED IN IDEOLOGY AND EXPRESSES AN OBVIOUSLY NATIONAL INTEREST. THE CHINESE SEEM ESPECIALLY ANXIOUS TO EXHORT THE WEST EUROPEANS TO GREATER EFFORTS AT UNITY AND DEFENCE. HOWEVER, THE NEW LINE PROBABLY ALSO REPRESENTS A GENUINE ASSESSMENT STEMMING FROM MAO'S OWN STRATEGIC THINKING ABOUT THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRAINS IN THE WEST, CONTINUING ARAB-ISRAELI TENSIONS, AND CONTINGENCIES IN THE BALKANS. IT ALSO REVEALS A RE-APPRAISAL BY THE CHINESE OF THEIR OWN DEFENCE CAPACITY AND OF SOVIET INTENTIONS TOWARDS THEM.

4. PEKING, HOWEVER, IS NOT INDICATING THAT CONFLICT IS NECESSARILY IMMINENT. RATHER, IT IS IMPLYING THAT THE CHANCES OF WAR MAY NOW BE GREATER THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE 1969 WHEN THE MAIN DANGER RESIDED IN THE PROSPECT OF A SOVIET ATTACK ON CHINA. SOVIET COMMENTARY NOT SURPRISINGLY HAS ACCUSED THE CHINESE OF TRYING TO PUSH MANKIND TOWARD A WORLD WAR.
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